The TRAPPIST MONK

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THE TRAPPIST MONK

BY

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THE TRAPPIST MONK

A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF REFORMED CISTERCIANS, WITH A SKETCH OF

THE ABBEY OF NEW MELLERAY

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BY

H. J. McDERMOTT

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A TRAPPIST MONK IN THE ANCIENT CHOIR HABIT

PREFACE

The strict seclusion of the Trappist cloisters and their usual location far from the cities and main highways, have given rise to much conjecture as to the manner of living of the monks.

Many utterly untrue assertions have been made concerning their rule, their customs and their practices.

It has been said that they maintain a silence so unbroken that they forget how to talk.

Some have declared that their fasts are so rigorous and their hours of repose so brief that broken physical health result therefrom, with a consequent liability to early death.

Even more serious are the declarations that the usefulness of the strictly cloistered order has passed along with the middle ages.

All of these assertions are made without even the foundation of a partial truth to give them a semblance of authenticity.

Even with less foundations are the frequently recurring statements that each Trappist must dig

his own grave—that he must ever salute a passing brother with the reminder: "Remember death."

That the life of the Trappist is one of austerity, of asceticism, is true. Yet its silence is not absolute, its fasts and abstinence are not destructive to health, nor is sufficient sleep denied. As to its usefulness to the church, the Holy See has never been remiss in declaring its urgent need of the prayers and penances of these ascetic warriors in the Church Militant.

That the penetential practices of the Trappists produce morbid and gloomy characters is absurd to those who know the peace and cheerfulness that prevail in this strict religious order. The remarkable longevity noted among members of very austere orders—at New Melleray Abbey alone are monks of sound body and clear mind at ages ranging from eighty to ninety-two years—is in itself an indication of the untruthfulness of some of these statements.

These erroneous ideas so frequently expounded and the lack of understanding of the aims of the order have inspired the following pages. If some broader understanding of the order and its origin, aim, utility and manner of life is created by this work, then its purpose shall have been fully accomplished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER I

Page

Monks—Their Origin 1

CHAPTER II

St. Benedict 3

CHAPTER III

Citeaux 9

CHAPTER IV

The Order of Citeaux 14

CHAPTER V

St. Bernard of Clairvaux 17

CHAPTER VI

Remarkable Growth 20

CHAPTER VII

The Decline 22

CHAPTER VIII

La Trappe 24

CHAPTER IX

The Reform of La Trappe 35

CHAPTER X

Dom Augustine de Lestrange 42

CHAPTER XI

Page

Melleray, Mt. Melleray, New Melleray 45

CHAPTER XII

The Trappists 53

CHAPTER XIII

The Life of the Trappist Monk 55

CHAPTER XIV

Division of Time 66

CHAPTER XV

The Mission of the Cistercian 68

PART II

A DAY WITH THE TRAPPISTS AT NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

CHAPTER I

Trappist Hospitality 75

CHAPTER II

A Visitor's Impressions 78

CHAPTER III

The Old Monk's Sermon 100

CHAPTER IV

The Trappist Pioneers 104

CHAPTER V

Conclusion 113

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

A Trappist Monk in the Ancient Choir Habit ---------- Frontispiece

A Trappist Lay Brother ---------- 12

One of America's First Abbeys ---------- 49

The Abbey Church at New Melleray ---------- 58

The Dormitory at New Melleray ---------- 63

A Wing of the Trappist Abbey of New Melleray ---------- 74

One End of the New Melleray Cloister ---------- 79

New Melleray Abbey Chapter Room ---------- 83

The Refectory at New Melleray Abbey ---------- 87

A Trappist "God's Acre" ---------- 91

The Pine Walk at New Melleray ---------- 95

Another View of New Melleray Abbey ---------- 110

CHAPTER I

MONKS—THEIR ORIGIN

The religious life was instituted by Our Lord Himself. In the Gospels, He laid down certain rules which must be practiced by everyone of His followers as the necessary condition for attaining everlasting life. Such, for example, are the Ten Commandments of the Old Law, interpreted in the light of the New.

Besides these precepts, however, which must be observed by all, He taught certain principles which He expressly stated were not to be considered as binding upon all or as necessary to the attainment of salvation; they are for those who would do more than the minimum required, for those whose aim is the surrender of all in the effort at attaining Christian perfection.

These counsels—we refer to them as the Evangelical Counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience—are the keystone of the system of monastic life which began with the first Christians and

which, developing as the Church had need of it, has evolved into the beautiful structure of cenobitical life as it exists today.

The religious life, so to speak, began with the first Christians and afterward became the characteristic of all who quitted everything to follow Christ. The life began first in the East, being practiced in divers forms, in all of which, however, were found the essence of the Evangelical Counsels.

It was eremitical with Paul, Anthony, Hilarion and their disciples or imitators who have been styled the Fathers of the Desert. It became cenobitic in the monasteries such as Tabenna and others founded by St. Pacomius, and in the Lauras of St. Sabas. It had many lawgivers in Syria, Egypt and Palestine. Among these we should mention St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, whose rule penetrated even into the West, where it found the religious life already flourishing in the Roman and Italian establishments of St. Athanasius. St. Eusebius of Verceil in his turn spread it to the foot of the Alps and it flourished in Gaul with the disciples of St. Martin of Tours at Ligugé, with those of Honoratus and Hilary of Lerins and those of Cassian at Marseilles.

CHAPTER II

ST. BENEDICT

The great lawgiver of the Monks of the West was St. Bendict (480-543). At the time of his birth the monastic life was in full bloom, so that at the age of fourteen years, when he retired to a grotto at Subiaco to live as a recluse disciples gradually followed him. He established in this neighborhood twelve small monasteries. Obliged to leave here, however, he retired to Mount Cassino (529 A. D.) and there he laid the foundations of a monastery which was to become the motherhouse of the Benedictine Order and of Monachism in the West.

It was there that he drew up the masterly rule which bears his name and which, for its wisdom and mildness, replaced all the ancient rules and served as a basis for those of the Institutes of the middle ages and of modern times. St. Benedict's Rule is an inexhaustible mine, in which, under a form relatively brief, is found a complete account

of the religious state, its nature and its divine origin.

The Rule consists of seventy-three chapters; nine of them treat of the duties of the Abbot, thirteen regulate the worship of God, twenty-nine are concerned with discipline, ten refer to the internal administration of the monastery and the remaining consist of miscellaneous regulations. The rule is noteworthy for its fine discretion and its wonderful moderation in a day when excesses in austerity were almost a characteristic among followers of cenobitical and ermetical life.

Under the older rules the austerities of the monks were left almost entirely to their own discretion. St. Benedict's experience and knowledge, however, were such that he believed in an emphasis on the common life with a consequent discouragement of private ventures in austerity; hence he entirely revised the older existing rules and entirely changed the method to be used by his brethren in pursuit of spiritual asceticism. Prior to the time of St. Benedict there was little permanence in the relations between monastery and individual monk. There were many who wandered from monastery to monastery, remaining at none for any length

of time. St. Benedict discouraged this practice by his strong condemnation of it; and the subsequent permanance brought about in the membership of his monasteries was in a large measure responsible for the lasting effect of his work.

Therefore, under the Rule of St. Benedict, a monk may be defined as a member of a community of men, leading a contemplative life apart from the world, under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and in accordance with this Rule.

St. Benedict's paternal desire seems to have been to keep healthy the physical state of the brethren by means of proper clothing, sufficient foods, and ample sleep, consistent, of course, with the practice of monastic asceticism. Fifteen centuries of practice have discovered but few opportunties for revision of the Rule in any but the most unimportant details, while they have amply proven its outstanding merits and the greatness of the mind that conceived it.

This Rule was the turning point of monachism in the west. Shortly before his death in A. D. 543, Saint Benedict sent his most celebrated disciple, St. Maurus, into Gaul. He there founded a

monastery called Glandfeuil which subsequently changed its name into St. Maurus-on-the-Loire. Benedictine foundations at once began to spring up on the soil of Gaul and in the neighboring countries which gradually absorbed their predecessors, for St. Benedict's Rule was rapidly and well-nigh generally substituted for all the others. For more than a century, however, the rule of St. Columbanus (543-615) remained a rival, but marked as it was with excessive severity, it was destined to disappear.

The Benedictines cultivated the land and applied themselves to the sciences and arts. At this epoch they had to clear the forests and the uncultivated fields which were given them for the foundation of their monasteries. We can truthfully assert of the Benedictines that they transformed and fertilized the Gaulish soil. In recompense of their labors and also owing to Christian generosity, they acquired vast possessions and great wealth. This was a danger which little by little weakened the primitive discipline and fervor. God exacts of the religious more than of any other person that he make use of temporal and terrestrial goods only in passing to reach the possession of heavenly and

eternal goods. This falling off from fervor was caused by the lack of superintendence also, as each Benedictine Monastery enjoyed complete independence. Generous and glorious efforts were made to stem the devastating torrent, such as the Reform of St. Benedict of Anianus. Popes, kings, princes, councils and abbots many times endeavored to check the decline but the results were of short duration.

When we speak of the laxity of the Benedictine life in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, it must not be thought that there existed grave disorders. The laxity consisted chiefly of a too free interpretation of the Rule, in practices evidently contrary to the lawgiver's mind, in the introduction of new customs and in a luxury of the things of the world which strangely contrasted with monastic poverty. Religious virtues shone still most brightly in many of the monasteries and the Benedictine life, though somewhat mitigated was not the less held in esteem and honor.

Cluny and St. Denis were beyond doubt, the richest and most celebrated Benedictine monasteries of their time, and when the Reform of Cluny was established the Rule was much removed from

its primitive purity and it was found difficult to restore it wholly to its former excellence. The Reform of Cluny united all the monasteries into a sort of confederation but the result was unwieldy and lacked cohesion. It was left for the Reform of Citeaux to brighten the dimmed lustre of the Benedictine code and to lay the foundations for an order that should with but brief lapses adhere consistently through the centuries to the Rule of St. Benedict.

CHAPTER III

CITEAUX

Cluny itself did not persevere in a Reform whose practice was mitigated. Hence arose a holy desire on the part of St. Robert to practice the Holy Rule to the very letter.

St. Robert was born in A. D. 1029 and commenced his novitiate in the monastery of Montire-la-Celle, of which he later became prior. In A. D. 1068 he was made Abbot of St. Michael de Tonnere in the Diocese of Langres. Believing, however, that the Rule was observed with less strictness than seemed proper St. Robert founded the monastery of Molesme. For a time the Rule was observed with great fidelity, but this abbey, too, became wealthy, a consequent falling off in ardor was noticeable to the saint, and he left to found a new monastery. The pious and zealous reformer associated with himself twenty of the most fervent religious and went to found in the diocese of Chalon-sur-Saone, with the authori-

zation of Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons and Legate of the Holy See, an establishment which he called the New Monastery. With him as co-founders were those who later became known to the world as St. Alberic and St. Stephen Harding. So was founded Citeaux. Here was the birthplace of the Order of Citeaux, or as it is universally know the Cistercian Order which latter name is derived from the name of its birth place. To St. Robert properly belongs the honor of commencing the foundations of the great Cistercian Order which, by its exemplary holiness and its consistent adherence to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, has given so much aid to the Holy Church.

St. Robert, the first Abbot of Citeaux, did not long remain there. Heeding the demands of the monks of Molesme whom he had left and trusting to their promises to return to strict observance of the Rule, he returned as Abbot, appointing as his successor St. Alberic.

Under St. Alberic, the religious of Citeaux assumed the white habit such as is worn today by the Cistercians. St. Benedict considered the color and quality of the garments as a matter of little consequence, so that the change in habit was not

A TRAPPIST LAY BROTHER
(Br. Nicholas of New Melleray, aged 92 years.)

a violation of his Rule. To St. Alberic the Order owes the introduction of Lay Brothers. On them depend to a large extent the temporalities of the abbey and due to their varied duties, they wear, instead of the white habit of the choir religious, one of a brown color. Also fearing that his monastery would be molested in its reform and even in its existence, St. Alberic petitioned Pope Paschal II to place it under the protection of the Holy See. It is then evident that the Cistercians are really true Benedictines, "reformed and transformed," but faithful to the traditions and the Holy Rule.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER OF CITEAUX

St. Alberic died in A. D. 1109 and his successor, St. Stephen Harding, an Englishman, is frequently called the real founder of the Cistercian Order. St. Stephen was the first to conceive a "religious order" as it exists today. He instituted the General Chapters, the annual visitation of each Monastery, and regulated the relations between the founded houses and those from which they had been formed. His work was constructed on foundations commenced by St. Robert and St. Alberic, but under him was the work of amalgamating the several monasteries into one great order accomplished. So to St. Robert properly belongs the credit of founding the order and to St. Stephen the credit of its development.

St. Stephen preserved the idea that each abbey was in itself an individual family, yet each was united with all others in one great order in the modern sense of the word. The Abbot and House

of Citeaux were pre-eminent over all the abbeys of the order. The Abbot of Citeaux held the right of visitation to be exercised at will and while he was not to interfere in the strictly individual temporalities of the subordinate abbey, yet his commands in matters of discipline were absolute. A further development was the assembling of all Abbots of other monasteries once each year at Citeaux for the General Chapter.

St. Stephen's greatest work for the order was the "Chart of Charity," a powerful constitution which was approved by Pope Calixtus 11 A. D. 1119. In this instrument, the words "Our Order," used in the modern sense, appear for the first time in church literature.

St. Stephen's first years as Abbot were filled with anxiety for the welfare of his order. He possessed, it is true, boundless confidence in God's goodness. Nevertheless he was reduced to a state of great anxiety in beholding the death, one after the other, of his spiritual children. The few remaining brothers were rapidly aging, so much so that they could hardly perform their sacred and other duties. Postulants and novices can practi-

cally be said not to have existed for the order up to this time.

When they were reduced to a mere handful, he began to have doubts as to whether or not their mode of life was pleasing to God. His anxiety, having reached a high pitch, caused him to command a dying monk to return, if God would permit, to the monastery after death and inform them if God were pleased with their mode of life. Within a day or two this religious did appear to St. Stephen and assured him that not only was their manner of living very pleasing to God, but that He Who had always watched over them would soon swell their dwindling numbers by sending them many postulants. Needless to say these monks, who had long been a subject even of ridicule for the world—nay, had even been looked upon as fanatics by less strict orders of their time—were greatly comforted to know that they had found such favor with God.

CHAPTER V

ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Their faith in God's watchful care was more than rewarded by the appearance of a young nobleman with some thirty of his relatives and friends, the cream of the nobility of that section of France. Casting themselves on their knees before St. Stephen they begged him and his monks to receive them into their little fold. They desired, like Christ, Who was always glad to be among the poor and lowly and even showed them the preference in choosing His apostles, to give up the riches and honors which were theirs to embrace the poverty which had been sanctified by His choosing it. The spokesman for this little group of devout souls was the young Bernard, later on to be the great Doctor of the Church. The year 1113 saw his entry in the order, and St. Stephen saw in it the unmistakable approbation of God of their work.

Some years later St. Bernard was sent to found a new monastery, it being necessary to make pro-

visions for ever increasing numbers of postulants. The new monastery was called Clairvaux and from it St. Bernard saw one of his religious seated on the chair of St. Peter, six others Cardinals and more than thirty Bishops. If we scan the list of the entire order we find four popes, many cardinals, fourteen patriarchs, eight hundred archbishops and fourteen hundred bishops. Still more glorious is the fact that the number of those who merited the title of Saint or at least Blessed, reaches the grand total of eight hundred and eighty-five.

In this same list, which of course contains a very small proportion of the whole order, we find a great number of the world's greatest and most important persons who joined these monks, who so few years before had been called fanatics. Henry, a son of one King of France and brother of another entered Clairvaux; Boson and Peter, princes of the same reigning house entered Clairvaux and Igin respectively. William of Montpellier, from whom have descended many of the kings of Christendom, retired to the Cistercian Monastery of Grandselve to become a simple religious. Otho and Conrad of Germany, grandsons and cousins of emperors embraced the Cistercian life. In Italy, Gumar, King of Sardinia, forsook his throne to become a

monk of Clairvaux. Peter, brother of the King of Portugal, Ferdinand, son of the King of Aragon, Bernard, a Saracen prince and Arnold, son of the Duke of Narbonne, all became monks of this order. In Scotland, Alexander, heir of the Kingdom, sought peace and spiritual security in the Cistercian cloister of Foigni. In Denmark, Eschillus, Prince of Denmark, Legate of the Holy See, and Regent of Denmark and Sweden, gave up his dignities and became a religious at Clairvaux. Eric, King of Denmark, became a Cistercian in a monastery founded in his own Kingdom.

Before his death St. Bernard saw the order which had displayed so little indication of its remarkable future when he joined, one of the great glories of Christendom. He, who was sent by God to so humble an order, lived to see its fame greatly enhanced by his own virtues, works and doctrine. The whole world is conversant with his journeys and apostolic labors in France, Italy and Germany on behalf of the peace of the Church and the honor of the Papacy. So bright a lustre did he spread over the order that by many he is regarded as its founder and the Church has appointed him its patron.

CHAPTER VI

REMARKABLE GROWTH

The Order of Citeaux spread with prodigious rapidity. Many Benedictine monasteries adopted its constitution and entire congregations such as Obazine, Dalon and Savigny are known to have joined it. In a short time France, Italy, Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland, Poland and other countries harbored flourishing monasteries of the Cistercian Order.

Thus we find a handful of men who, renouncing the world and thrusting themselves entirely on God, soon gave the world four popes, Alexander III, Eugenius III, Benedict XII and Urban IV, as well as twelve cardinals, innumerable archbishops and bishops, and drawing to themselves the cream of the earth as members. There entered the order in a brief space of time three kings, ten sons of kings, sixteen other princes and countless nobles who gave up their worldly all to obtain the fruits of spiritual life.

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If this is surprising, how much more wonderful are the lists of its saints and of those who were declared "blessed." Its saints became so numerous that the General Chapter of A. D. 1255 ordered the discontinuation of further canonizations of Cistercians in spite of the fact that at this time miracles attributed to those proposed for canonization were shining with great lustre; giving as the reason for this step the following: "Lest these solemn proclamations of sanctity, by their frequency, might diminish due respect towards holiness, and destroy that tone of fervor and generous emulation so necessary for the support of the austere life of Citeaux."

Within fifty years this order had five hundred abbeys, and later numbered over ten thousand monasteries and convents. But what is more glorious by far than this is that not only did it become so powerful as to rule Europe spiritually, but it ruled it temporally, virtually speaking, as well.

CHAPTER VII

THE DECLINE

But alas! The days of decadence came for it also. Riches and immense properties opened here too the breach to laxity. It wandered away from its primitive simplicity, and once on the downward track, it rapidly lost sight of its former fervor. The evils of the times are largely responsible, too. The "*Commendam*" was introduced into the order about the end of the fifteenth century, by which was established the practice of giving to the King the power of nominating abbots over the monasteries of the kingdom. The result of this practice was that men were sometimes appointed abbots of places they had never seen and would never visit. The appointment was in the form of a reward for some service rendered the king, or a gift to a court favorite, and, entailing as it did the right to the revenues of the abbey to be enjoyed as the appointee saw fit, the practice resulted in the squandering of the monasteries' revenues and the more ser-

ious matter of a lack of stable government by an elected abbot whose interests, temporal and spiritual, would naturally be more likely to bring about activity in behalf of the abbey than would the self interest of a court favorite. Left thus without proper rulers, and with their revenues dissipated, the monasteries gradually relaxed from the austerity and monastic holiness of St. Bernard's time.

In many abbeys, however, the fervor knew no diminution for many years. They remained scrupulous observers of St. Benedict's Rule and the brethren prayed, studied and labored at cultivation of lands that, in those localities even today show the beneficial effects of the ancient Cistercian labors.

In the seventeenth century, the Order of Citeaux was divided into two Congregations, the Common and the Strict Observance. The latter also were called the "Abstainers," because they kept the abstinence prescribed by the Rule. They acknowledged the leadership of Denis Largentier, Abbot of Clairvaux.

CHAPTER VIII

LA TRAPPE

The Abbey of La Trappe in Perche belonged to the Strict Observance. This abbey had originally come into the order from the Benedictine Congregation of Savigny, and had been founded in A. D. 1140, by Rotrou, Count de Perche. In 1148 La Trappe was united to Clairvaux at the request of St. Bernard.

Felibien, in his *"Decription de la Abbaye de la Trappe,"* published in Paris, in 1671, describes the location of La Trappe as follows:

"This Abbey is situated in a large valley. The woods and the hills which surround it are disposed as if designed to hide it from the rest of the world. They enclose arable lands, plantations of fruit trees, pasture grounds, and nine ponds which encompass the Abbey, and render it so difficult of access that it is very hard to come at it without a guide. There was hitherto a road from Montagne to Paris behind the walls of the garden; but though

it was in the wood, and above five hundred paces from the enclosure, and though it was not possible to remove it farther without a vast expense, yet the Abbot turned it another way, in order to render the place around the Monastery more solitary. And indeed nothing is more so than this desert. For though there are several towns and large villages at three leagues distance round it, yet to people who are there it seems to be a lonely and foreign country. Silence reigns throughout; and if any noise is heard, it is only the rustling of trees shaken by the wind, or the brooks running through the pebbles. The Abbey discovers itself at going out of the forest of Perche, when one is coming from the south; and though the traveler thinks himself very near, he finds it almost a mile before he reaches it. But having at last descended the hill, crossed the heath, and gone on a little way amongst hedges and through shady paths, he comes to the first court, where the receiver's apartment is. It is separated from those of the monks by a strong palisade of pales and thorns which the Abbot caused to be made after he retired thither."

Sharing in the eminent holiness of all the Cistercian Abbeys of that time, La Trappe became noted

for its virtue and its austerities. With years came wealth and vast possessions which attracted the cupidity of its enemies. Situated, as it was, close to Normandy, it was a mark for the attacks of the English in their long drawn out wars with France, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It often was plundered and at length the monks were reduced to want. When the wars ceased at the beginning of the sixteenth century, conditions at La Trappe were sadly changed.

When the abbot of La Trappe died, the King gave the abbey to Cardinal de Bellay "in commendam." The monks refused to agree, and elected one of their own number abbot. The Cardinal was too strong for them however, and their abbot was compelled to retire. In A. D. 1548 another attempt was made to elect an abbot, and thenceforth, this effort proving unsuccessful, they were ruled by abbots "in commendam." Lacking leadership in piety and the paternal guidance of an abbot in following the holy rule, the monastic life lost much of its beauty, the monks were reduced in number and the buildings themselves fell into ruin.

The ways of God are indeed mysterious, however, for though the practice of abbots *in com-*

mendam, was one of the causes for decay, this same instrumentality was used in restoring to La Trappe the ancient glory it had enjoyed in the days of St. Bernard; this through the appointment of de Rancé as commendatory abbot.

Armand Jean Bouthillier de Rancé, who was to restore the glory of La Trappe, was born A. D. 1626, on January 9th. His father was a high official in the household of the Queen of France, and his Christian name was gotten from Cardinal Richelieu, his godfather. He was intended for a military career, but his second brother, who was destined for the church, having died, Armand was promptly changed from the army to the Church, and at the early age of twelve years received orders and was given three abbeys and several priories *in commendam* these yielding an income of twenty thousand livres a year. His classical knowledge was very great, and he knew the Greek and Latin authors intimately, so much so that when examined by one of the Bishops in Greek he excited the admiration of his examiner by the fluency with which he translated the books set before him .

In A. D. 1650, the death of his father placed him in a position of great affluence, as in addition to

the revenues of the abbeys and priories he enjoyed the income of an estate amounting to some thirty thousand livres a year. The seduction of wealth proved too much for the young cleric, who yielded himself unrestrainedly to the life of a man of pleasure. He hunted and kept up great state in his country house, a course of life which was scarcely interrupted by his ordination as a priest on January 22, 1651. His appearance at this time is thus described by one who knew him:

"He wore a light coat of beautiful violet colored cloth. His hair hung in long curls down his back and shoulders. He wore two emeralds at the joining of his ruffles, and a large diamond ring upon his finger. When indulging the pleasures of the chase, he usually laid aside every mark of his profession; wore a sword, and had two pistols in his holsters. His dress was fawn-colored, and he used to wear a black cravat embroidered with gold. In the more serious society he sometimes was forced to meet he thought himself very clerical indeed when he put on a black velvet coat with buttons of gold."

The great ambition of de Rancé's life was to succeed his uncle in the Archbishopric of Tours. The

latter endeavored to get him appointed co-adjutor, but having failed in the project, he got de Rancé appointed Deputy for the Clergy of Tours, at the assembly in Paris. This occurred in 1655, and the position gave ample scope for the display of the great powers of intellect which he undoubtedly possessed. It also gave him an opportunity for the display of the great nobility of his character which was hidden beneath the cloak of a man of pleasure. His first act was to espouse the cause of the Cardinal de Retz, then in exile in Rome. This course of action was most unpopular at Court, and Cardinal Mazarin used every effort to win over de Rancé from the cause of de Retz. He even went so far as to offer de Rancé the Co-adjutatorship of Tours, but the cause of justice was greater in the eyes of de Rancé than even the achievement of his life ambition, and this glittering bribe was refused. The strength of character shown by de Rancé on this and on similar occasions, in addition to his well known talents, increased his reputation in the Assembly, so much so, that in July, 1656, he was named as one of the joint Editors of an edition of Eusebius, a task which was unfortunately not carried out. In this year, through the

influence of his uncle, the Archbishop, he was appointed almoner to the Duc d'Orleans. Meantime his action in the matter of the Cardinal de Retz having brought him into disfavor with the Court, he determined to retire from the Assembly to his house at Veret, which he accordingly did early in 1657. Here he continued to live a life of ease and gaiety until, getting bored with the want of variety in his idle life, he with three companions, formed the resolution of riding out into the world, like knights errant of old, to seek adventure; however the resolution was not carried out, though it indicates the beginning of de Rancé's disgust at the world.

This feeling of ennui and disgust was but the first movements of a conscience desirous of higher things. To a high sense of justice he added a great love of truth and a wide charity for the poor. Two incidents which occured about this period also caused him to reflect on the uncertainty of life. In one case he attacked single handed and disarmed a trespasser on his game preserves, a man who happened to be a noted duellist. This man afterwards said that he desired to kill de Rancé, and in fact tried to do so, but that something of super-

ior strength seemed to hold him back. In the other case, whilst hunting, a shot from one of his companion's guns struck him on the side but fortunately was deflected by the buckle of his shooting bag.

In a letter to a friend he said that he looked to the world for repose and could not find it, and finding nought else but emptiness, he had decided to leave this world to seek a better one.

His next step was to go on retreat to the Oratorians in Paris from which date the whole course of his life was changed. He dismissed his servants, gave up hunting and conducted his house with the greatest frugality. All his former companions were excluded, and he formed serious intentions of going on the foreign mission to India. In the meantime he opened his mind to the Duke of Orleans, whose almoner he was, and having converted the Duke to his ideas and mode of life, he had the happiness of seeing him die a holy, penitent death.

De Rancé now determined to lead a religious life and, to be more alone, he retired to the house of a friend where he lived for a short time under an assumed name. His identity being discovered he returned to Veret. Here he put on his priestly

habit instead of the rich clothes he had hitherto worn; sold all his plate and glass; did without fires in his room and attended on himself. For exercise he visited the poor in his district and distributed amongst them the price he had received for his plate.

The change which had taken place in the manner of life of de Rancé having reached the ears of his uncle, the Archbishop of Tours, the latter sent for him, and endeavored to dissuade him from abandoning the great career which his talents and position promised. De Rancé, however, remained firm in his determination and returned home resolved to live a life of seclusion.

Two questions now remained to be settled. During his minority the revenues of the abbeys which he held "*in commendam*" had been spent by his father, and since he came of age he had devoted all these funds to his own personal use. In the eyes of the Church, the surplus revenues, after providing for his own wants as Abbot, belonged to the poor, and in order to restore to the poor what he and his father had spent, he decided to sell his ancestral estate and to devote the entire proceeds to charity. He therefore sold Veret for one hundred

thousand crowns and gave the entire amount, save a small sum, to various charities. The other question referred to the various abbeys he held. The Bishop whom he consulted on the point said that pluralities being against the spirit of the Church should be given up and advised de Rancé to surrender all of them except one. This sacrifice he also made, reserving to himself the poorest of his abbeys, La Trappe. Up to this time he had no idea of embracing the monastic life; in fact he had towards it a feeling of repugnance.

His friend, the Bishop of Comminges, having approved of all de Rancé had so far done, now advised him to retire to La Trappe and undertake its government. "What," exclaimed de Rancé, "I, a frocked monk! Impossible!" However, the seed was sown, and little time after his return home he determined to make his sacrifice complete by severing the last tie which bound him to the world.

The news that the famous Abbe de Rancé had determined to sell his patrimony, to surrender his pluralities and to retire to La Trappe, was received by the world of Paris first with incredulity, and then with derision. The world, always unwilling to admit higher motives than those that govern its

own actions attributed his conduct to disappointed ambition, but de Rancé had got beyond caring for the opinions, good or bad, of the men amongst whom his life had hitherto been spent, and accordingly in 1662 he shook the dust of the world from his feet and retired to La Trappe.

CHAPTER IX

THE REFORM OF LA TRAPPE

The task which lay before de Rancé was one of extraordinary difficulty. De Rancé had really to effect a reform within the reform itself, since the monasteries of the strict observance, of which La Trappe was one, had really no uniform manner of practicing the regular life. The condition of the Abbey itself was deplorable; the very building was a ruin, the church little better, with the belfry shaking at every peal.

De Rancé announced the changes he contemplated to the monks already there, and stated his intention of introducing other Monks of the Strict Observance into the monastery. The innovations met with little favor and those of the monks who wished to retire from the monastery on pension were permitted to do so. After the coming of the other Monks introduced by de Rancé he decided to become Abbot in reality as well as in name, and this

necessitated his first becoming a true Cistercian monk.

The Vicar-General of the Order endeavored to dissuade him, pointing out how his former life of ease and his delicate temperament unfitted him for the hardships of the strictest order of the Church. The reply of de Rancé is a beautiful example of humility. "It is true, my Father, as you say, I am a priest, but I have lived until now in a manner unworthy of my character; I have had several abbeys, but instead of being a father to my monks, I have dissipated their goods, and the patrimony of the Crucifix; I am a doctor, but I do not know the alphabet of Christianity. The ignorant do violence to heaven, but as for me, I shall perish with all my doctrine and all my learning, if you do not have pity on me and grant me the favor I ask. It is true I have made some figure in the world, but it is still more true that I have been like to those sign-posts which show the way to travellers, but do not move themselves. Finally, my Father, this is a matter which is ended before God. I wish to do penance. Grant me the favor I demand." Such a letter could only have one result, and the request of de Rancé was complied with. His next step was

to have a regular abbot appointed and freedom restored to the monastery. This, after some delay, was acceded to by the King.

De Rancé now formally entered upon his novitiate at Perseigne, where he remained five months when his health broke down, and he had to return to La Trappe for a short time. Having completed his novitiate he made his solemn vows, together with an old servant of his own, on June 26th, 1664, and a few days later received the abbatial blessing and investiture from Dr. Patrick Plunket, the exiled Bishop of Ardagh, himself a Cistercian monk who had been driven out of Ireland and was forced to seek a home with his order in France.

De Rancé drew up for his religious very precise regulations which interpreted St. Benedict's Rule and brought back into being, as far as he was able, the Cistercian Constitutions. The new regulations, however, fell somewhat short of the observance of the first Fathers. The undertaking was an unexpected success and de Rancé himself confesses his inability to do better considering the virtue of the men of his time.

It was the holy desire of de Rancé to restore the entire Cistercian Order to the ancient rule, it being

at the time divided into congregations of the strict and the ordinary observance. De Rancé and the abbot of Val Richer were selected, in 1664 to go to Rome to plead for the restoration of the ancient rule.

On the eve of his journey, as he led his monks to work in the garden, he wondered from where would come the money to make the trip. Suddenly his spade struck a hard substance, and further investigation revealed a hoard of welcome and providential gold pieces to serve as an addition to his scanty purse.

By his holiness, his mean dress, frugal living and great learning, de Rancé won golden opinions in Rome, but his mission was unsuccessful, and after further futile attempts, he returned to La Trappe in 1666.

As, in early days, the fame of Citeaux and Clairvaux had attracted men of every station, so now the fame of La Trappe and the austere holiness of its abbot brought to it men from every station of life. The records of the monastery afford curious reading. Here came priests and monks anxious to live a life of angelic purity and holiness, here came the soldier to end his days in penance, and

the learned doctors of the schools to lay aside their learning for the psalter and the spade. Here was to be seen suffering borne with joy for the sake of Jesus Crucified. We are told that one brother who was suffering from gangrene which the doctor was cutting away refrained from exclaiming at the pain. The physician, not knowing if he were cutting the dead or the live flesh, asked him to call out when it pained. "How can I?" asked the monk, "when to suffer in the name of Jesus is such joy." Novices came, and the community grew, but none knew who his neighbor was, nor, in some cases could they tell how the buildings in which they lived were constructed. One old monk, when dying, asked de Rancé to continue to pray for a brother whom he had left in the world living a life of sin and for whom he had prayed for many years. De Rancé withdrew and returning with one of the principle monks, caused him to throw back his cowl so that to the dying monk was revealed the face of that brother for whom he had wept and prayed.

Here came Bossuet, who had been de Rancé's rival in the Sorbonne, and who now desired to taste of the peace which La Trappe afforded.

Here, in 1680, came the unfortunate James II, of England, accompanied by Lord Dumbarton, and, while Sarsfield was making his last stand at Limerick, James was seeking at La Trappe those consolations of the cross that the crown had failed to afford.

"He was kindly received by the abbot," says a writer in the 'Dublin Review'," and after partaking of his hospitality attended evening service in the chapel. After communicating on the following morning, and inspecting the occupations of the various religious, he visited a recluse that lived some distance up the mountains. His solitude was never interrupted, save by an occasional visit from de Rancé. James recognized in him an officer who formerly had distinguished himself in his service, and asked him at what time did he descend to the monastery to hear mass; the answer was at half past three.

"Surely," said Lord Dumbarton, "that is impossible," knowing as he did that the way was dark and dreary, and at that hour highly dangerous. "I have served my King in frost and snow by night and day for years, and I should blush indeed were I not to do as much for the Master Who has called

me to the service now, and Whose uniform I wear," said the old soldier. As he turned away his head, it was noted by the attendants that the afflicted monarch's eyes were filled with tears. On his departure the following day, he knelt to receive the Abbot's blessing. He was supported on arising by the arm of a monk whom he recognized as having been known to him one time as a faithful officer and loyal friend, by name the Honorable Robert Graham.

Gradually the reforms introduced by de Rancé at La Trappe spread through all the houses of the Strict Observance. Ill health, however, compelled de Rancé to resign as Abbot, though he continued to live at the Abbey, broken in body for five years, until his death. His sufferings were terrible, the years bringing him veritable martyrdom, yet no sound of complaint escaped him. Conscious to the last, his face lit up with an unearthly joy, he exclaimed: "Oh! Eternity" and again, "What happiness, oh, my God to spend an Eternity with Thee." Beside him knelt the Bishop of Seez, his lifelong friend, giving him the last absolutions. With the words, "Lord, do not delay," on his lips, his soul went into Eternity.

CHAPTER X

DOM AUGUSTINE DE LESTRANGE

The Reform of de Rancé, which had penetrated into Tuscany in 1700, lasted until the great French Revolution. This reformation, however, was not a complete return to the original austerity as practiced by the early Cistercians. De Rancé had endeavored to bring about this complete reform but was unable to do so. However, the house of Val Sainte returned to the ancient usage of Citeaux and this observance has since been carried out in all the houses in the world which are united to La Trappe.

The French Revolution brought further troubles on La Trappe. The General Constituent Assembly was very near making it an exception when framing the general decree of the abolition of the Religious Orders, but its enemies were too strong and it had to succumb.

At this time, however, the abbot of La Trappe was a man of valor, energy and courage. It was

evident that God wished to preserve La Trappe as a seed for the future, for this Abbot, Dom Augustine de Lestrange, resolved that he would save the community by transferring it into Switzerland. He obtained from the magistrates of Friburg the ancient Chartreuse monastery of Val Sainte, where, as we have previously stated, he established the ancient usage of Citeaux.

Pius VI encouraged the settlement of Val Sainte, without giving it formal approbation. Attempts at founding monasteries in Spain, Italy, England and America attest the power of expansion of the rising congregation, especially when consideration is given to their so recent expulsion from La Trappe.

Driven from Val Sainte by the wars of Napoleon I, Dom Augustine was obliged to wander with his communities into Austria, Bavaria, Poland and even into Russia, leaving in each place religious to start new foundations.

Later he was obliged to flee to England and to America (1811) and he brought his proscribed communities with him and laid the foundations of several monasteries.

When the persecutions in France had ceased Dom Augustine at once returned there and purchased two ancient abbeys, La Trappe, from which he had been driven, and Aiguebelle. After dividing the religious between the two monasteries, he himself remained at La Trappe.

It is from this latter monastery that the Order today derives the name of "Trappist" by which it is popularly known.

Other monasteries were revived or founded anew, some with the regulations of Val Sainte and others with those of de Rancé, the difference between them being more apparent than real.

CHAPTER XI

MELLERAY, MOUNT MELLERAY, NEW MELLERAY

In 1794 a company of Dom Augustine's monks destined for Canada, were detained in England, and established at Lullworth Castle by Mr. Thomas Weld. Here they remained until 1817 when they were compelled to leave, owing to the action of the English Government in endeavoring to get the Abbot to confine the novitiate to Frenchmen. The Abbot petitioned Louis XVIII of France for the restoration of the Order, and the Abbey of Melleray, in Brittany, was set apart for the monks from England.

The revolution of 1830 brought fresh troubles and Father Anthony, who had been superior at Lullworth, in England, prior to the transfer of the monks from England to Melleray, decided to provide a home for his monks should they be again thrown on the world. Father Anthony at this time was Visitor General of the Order; he sent the

Prior of Melleray, Father Vincent Ryan, and another Irish monk, Father Malachy, to Ireland to seek a foundation there. Through the kindness of a friend a house and fifty acres of land at Rathmore, in Kerry County, were obtained.

The storm then broke in France and those monks of Melleray who were English subjects were sent under military escort to Nantes. Sixty-four of their number, having desired to be sent to Ireland, were transferred to a sloop of war and sent to Cork, were they landed on December 1, 1831, and proceeded to join Father Vincent Ryan at Rathmore. In 1832 six hundred acres of poor mountain land were rented near Cappoquin and here, on the 20th of August, 1833, the foundation stone of Mount Melleray was laid and the Cistercians were re-established in Ireland, nearly three hundred years having elasped since they had been driven out by the rapacity of Henry VIII.

The founding of Mount Melleray was attended by the usual hardships surrounding such enterprises. These, however, were greatly lessened by the generous help given the monks by the fervent inhabitants of the "Emerald Isle."

The result of the labors of the monks and their volunteer helpers is well described in an article penned in 1892 by the then sub prior of New Melleray Abbey, Father Placid, who had previously spent many years at Mount Melleray.

"Mt. Melleray is situated about three and a half miles northward from Cappoquin. The abbey cannot be seen from Cappoquin, as the woods belonging to Sir Richard Keane's demesne conceal it from view, and, for the same reason, neither can the mountains to the rear of the Abbey be seen from the town. In fact, from the town no vestige of the celebrated Abbey of Trappists can be discerned. The town, like others of its size, is generally pretty noisy, there is an almost constant hub-bub there from morning to night, and the passing traveler sees nothing to indicate that in the neighborhood there is a celebrated establishment of ascetics, of men living in profound solitude, entirely shut off from the busy world, observing among themselves an almost unbroken silence and devoted exclusively to their eternal interests. When the traveler has driven perhaps a mile and a half on the Clonmel road, of a sudden he is startled. In front of him is an extensive plain, not cultivated, for it is in

great part covered with heather; bounding his horizon on the north is a range of mountains, the two principal heights being Knockmealdown and Knocknafolla. Quietly seated at the foot of this latter height is the Abbey, nestling in groves of modern date. The buildings are low but very extensive. Looking down on the Abbey from the tower of the church, one might fancy himself looking down upon a village. A well kept avenue leads from the main road up to the Abbey. The first building that is seen upon this avenue is a school for little boys of the neighborhood, and generally two choir monks are employed to teach in it. The next building is the classical seminary, having a small lawn in front. After leaving the seminary the monastery lodge is reached in two or three minutes. This lodge is really a large two-story house, having from ten to twelve large rooms. As this lodge is outside the enclosure of the monastery, women as well as men are always in attendance. At every hour of the day or night they are prepared to receive guests. Men who wish to see the interior of the monastery have no difficulty in gratifying their desire, for one of the brothers shows them with great courtesy all that is worth

ONE OF AMERICA'S FIRST ABBEYS—NOW SERVING AS THE LODGE AT NEW MELLERAY.

seeing—viz.: the church, chapter room, dormitory, refectory, cloisters, cemetery, sacristy, shops, garden, library, etc. Although the monks are met with in all parts of the house they never speak to visitors, they are intent on their various duties and go through them in silence. The numerous visitors never disturb them in the least, for the brother porter so manages that while the visitors are in the immediate vicinity of the brethren, they speak only in a low whisper. The Brethren, though they are devoted to solitude and to seclusion and to silence, are not misanthropes, but, on the contrary, have very warm feelings for their fellow men, and hence are not disturbed when seeing them in the monastery."

It was this community which, true to the indefatigable missionary zeal which so characterizes that island sent a community of Trappists to the United States, where in 1849, the abbey of New Melleray, dedicated to Our Lady of La Trappe, was founded.

New Melleray Abbey was founded in the Diocese of Dubuque, Iowa, at the request of Msgr. Loras, its Bishop, who was so struck by the holiness of the Monks of Mt. Melleray that he requested a

foundation in his diocese. In 1862 it was raised to the dignity of an abbey, the first abbot being Dom Ephrem McDonald.

Since it is possible to give an adequate description of the life of the Trappist Monk today only by describing the actual routine of a monastery, we shall later in these pages conduct our reader through a period of twenty-four hours in New Melleray, and point out to him the necessity of a life of contemplation which, in the monasteries of the Reformed Cistercian Order, reaches as near to perfection as human frailty will permit.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRAPPISTS

In 1847 the Cistercians were divided into three congregations, La Grande Trappe, Sept Fons and Westmalle. The first preserved the ancient usages of Citeaux, the two others the regulations introduced by the Reform of Rancé. The necessity of a fusion was felt and desired by all concerned. Pope Leo XIII heartily wished for it, and on his initiative a General Chapter of the three Congregations assembled at Rome on October 1, 1892, and its active labors were rewarded by the reunion of the three congregations. The Pope confirmed the decisions of the Chapter, and thus La Trappe became an order quite distinct from the Cistercians of the Common Observance.

In 1902 an Apostolic Constitution declared the "Trappists" to be "True Cistercians," having an incontestible right to the privileges of the ancient order. The constitutions of the order having been approved by the Holy See in 1894, and the old mon-

astery of Citeaux having been acquired in 1898, the same Constitution decreed that the General of the Order, whilst residing at Rome, shall in the future bear the title of Abbot of Citeaux. The Pope granted the order the name of "Reformed Cistercians of the Strict Observance." The order follows the Rule of St. Benedict, St. Stephen's Chart of Charity and the recent Constitution approved by the apostolic See.

Thus the Trappists, or the Reformed Cistercians of the Strict Observance are the heirs of their fathers who quitted Molesme to live more comformably to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, are the spiritual children of the last Father of the Church, St. Bernard, and have profited by the labors of the Abbot Rancé and Dom Augustine de Lestrange to an extent that after centuries of holy srife to the end that they might be permitted absolute conformance to the rules of their predecessors, that right is theirs at last.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LIFE OF THE TRAPPIST MONK

Man is, in this world, so placed between the good things of life and those of eternity, that the more he alienates himself from the former, the nearer does he approach attainment of the latter. He who is wholly given up to the good things of this world, so that he finds in them the end and object of his existence, almost certainly deprives himself of participation in the rewards of eternity. So, in like manner, does he whose thoughts are centered on the Kingdom of God, whose detachment from the temporalities is almost entire, take the most direct way to the favor of his Divine Master.

Since the good things of this life divide themselves easily into the three classes, riches that make life easy, sensuality that appeals to the flesh, and pride which demands those honors and positions of authority that flatter it, the obvious way to attain perfection is the total abandonment of these good things so pleasurable to the body, yet so destructive to the spirit.

Abandonment of worldly pleasures, then, being calculated to increase the certainty of accumulating spiritual riches, has ever been the desire of holy souls. Monastic asceticism is merely an organized effort directed to this end. Hence, the Church, a power infallibly able to determine what is morally right, has recognized this ascetic instinct in man and has approved the efforts of those whose work it has been to enroll these seekers after spiritual improvement in the brotherhoods of the monastic orders. The rules under which these organized efforts are made are subjected by the Church to rigorous scrutiny, and the organizations themselves must be approved or discontinued.

It was the ascetic monks who, by teaching the dignity of manual labor, virtually created our present civilization. Thus the labors that benefited them spiritually also created an endowment of temporal goods for the world. In other words, goodness tends to diffuse itself, so that others outside the source of that goodness participate in its fruits. It is this fact that has made necessary to the Church, at every stage of her existence, the Contemplative Orders whose unceasing prayer and austerity so powerfully radiate goodness.

THE ABBEY CHURCH AT NEW MELLERAY

The Trappist Life is a life of prayer, silence, labor and self denial; it is a life of contemplation; a life where practice of the Evangelical Counsels is combined with those other holy practices of self abnegation which through twenty centuries the Church has recognized as efficacious to those that practice them and as a source of grace and spiritual favors to her children.

Prayer satisfies the needs of the heart; to the soul it gives peace, joy and happiness whilst raising it toward its Creator and Father. The religious, united with God by his state, should above all things be a man of prayer. Prayer, then, is the first and most noble occupation of the Cistercian Monk. It is to the liturgical prayer, however, that he devotes his care and attention. The singing of the Divine Office, a sacred obligation imposed on him by reason of his vows and his vocation, is the most beautiful form of prayer, conferring as it does on man the offices fulfilled by the saints and angels in heaven.

The Cistercian Order has its own Breviary, made out of the Rule of St. Benedict, by reproducing its prescriptions and distributions. Its arrangement differs notably from the Roman. As for the Missal,

the Roman "Ordo Missœ" has been adopted from the seventeenth century.

In order to honor in a more particular manner the Mother of God, toward whom the order has always professed a most tender devotion, her "Little Office" is daily recited in choir in such a way that every canonical hour is preceeded by the corresponding hour in honor of the glorious Virgin Mary.

The office takes up about six hours of the day of the religious. Lay Brothers, however, who are more especially engaged in exterior works, devote less time to it.

After prayer, St. Benedict prescribes what he calls "Reading." To this monastic duty the rule attaches also great importance. Between the various regular exercises there are intervals or free moments which the religious spend in reading, in intercourse with their superiors or in their particular devotions. Although the order has been reproached with not loving study, yet this is not true, as is attested by its libraries, its literary works, and the importance the Rule attaches to Reading and to Study.

Manual labor has always held a very important

place in the Code. St. Benedict prescribes it under all its forms, either for the interior of the monastery or in the fields. Heirs of the Benedictine traditions, the Cistercians have accomplished labor most remarkable in the clearing of lands and agricultural improvements. The choir religious have usually about four hours of work each day divided equally between the fore and afternoons; the Lay Brothers devote to it a greater period of time.

Fasts and privations were held in great esteem by the ancient monks but in its wisdom the Church has seen fit to relax somewhat the long fasts imposed by the older rules. The Cistercian has ample food under the present rules, and while abstaining from meat, fish, etc., is calculated to mortify their appetites and curb their concupiscences, the effect on their health is the reverse of harmful. Exceptions on account of illness or age may be made by the superior or abbot in regard to the abstinence.

Perpetual silence is one of the means of penance and mortification imposed by the Rule. This silence assumes a particular characteristic with the Cistercian Monks since it suppresses the use of speech, replacing it by a certain number of conven-

tional signs to indicate the necessary things. This rule, however, becomes relatively easy. Moreover, it admits just exceptions, for the religious is always free to speak to his superiors and often with others, according to his duties and the position he holds. Statements to the effect that the silence is so unbroken that the monks forget how to speak are absurd.

Credence has been given, in some instances, to the statement that insufficient sleep is allowed. The rule grants seven hours sleep in winter and six hours in summer. In the summer season, however, the hour taken from the night is replaced by an hour's rest period in the middle of the day. Rising takes place at two o'clock a. m., on ordinary days; on feast days the hour of arising is one a. m., or one-thirty a. m., according to the solemnity of the feast. The Rule exacts that the religious should sleep clothed, on a simple straw mattress. The repose is taken in a common dormitory but in separate cells.

The austerity of the Cistercian life consists mainly in fidelity to the common exercises. Penances and corporal mortifications are merely sec-

THE DORMITORY AT NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

ondary and allowed, or imposed, with the greatest discretion. This life, being essentially monastic, is attached to solid practices and virtues; and, whilst giving full liberty to well inspired individual piety it permits individual devotional exercises of modern origin only with reserve and moderation.

CHAPTER XIV

DIVISION OF TIME

To actually tabulate the day of the Cistercian Choir Religious, it consists of the following:

Four hours of the day for Divine Office and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

Two hours for Masses, though only one is of obligation by rule.

Two hours for study and spiritual reading.

Four hours for manual labor.

Four hours for reading, minor duties of the monastery and private devotions.

One hour for meals.

Seven hours for sleep.

Or, more concisely we might say one-third of the day is spent in the church occupied in the noblest manner possible to the human being, one-third is spent in works of penance and occupations tending to enable one to practice virtues and thus acquire them, especially the two most precious,

charity and humility; while the last third is given to satisfying the demands of nature in sleeping and eating.

One is then lead to exclaim, with the good Cure d'Ars, who was lamenting his failure to become a Cistercian Monk, that the terribleness of Trappist life is in its name only. It undoubtedly is an austere life; but inspired scriptures tell us that they who shall have left all things for love of God shall count it as nothing.

CHAPTER XV

THE MISSION OF THE CISTERCIAN

The life of the Cistercian, the Contemplative Life, does not lack the element of practical usefulness measured even by the hard standards of this modern world of ours. The life must needs first obey that law of God: "Love God!" But second only to that first law does it place the injunction: "Love Thy Neighbor!"

The Contemplative Life is a life ordered in view of contemplation; a way of living especially adapted to lead to and facilitate contemplation while it excludes all other preoccupations and intents. Contemplation may be defined as the complacent loving gaze of the soul on known Divine Truth, and the searching by the intellect and the soul for further enlightenment and spiritual attainments by means of Divine Grace. According to St. Bernard it is the highest form of human worship as it is essentially an act of adoration and an utter surrender of man's whole being.

Silence is, of course, the proper element of the contemplative soul, since to converse with God and man at the same time is impossible.

Religious life exists in its perfection where silence and solitude prevent distractions. This life being one essentially of self denial and self sacrifice must needs provide the antidote to those selfish instincts to which all of us are heir. Hence the ordered austerity, the silence, the fasts and abstinence, the obedience and the manual labor so wonderfully arranged in the Cistercian Order for providing the real means to a life of contemplation.

The principle way in a life of this kind to aid others, therefore, is by means of prayer and penance. By prayer they draw down on struggling humanity manifold graces. By penance do they strive to atone for the offences of man and to appease God's righteous wrath. Nor do the earth's limits compass their love for their neighbor, since theirs are works equally applied to those of this life who have departed it and are but awaiting the season when God's justice shall have been satisfied so that they may be admitted to His Presence.

The interior life is the source of the most pure and abundant charity for souls and for the reliev-

ing of human suffering. An extensive interior life radiates on the world the rewards of the merits, prayers and sacrifices of those who live it. There is no selfishness in it.

"Those who pray," said the great statesman, Donoso Cortes, "do more for the world than those who combat; and if the world is growing worse it is because there is now more fighting done than praying."

"The hands raised heavenward," said Bossuet, "overcome more enemies than those who strike."

In their deserts the ancient solitaries were often animated with a zeal that caused St. Augustine to exclaim:

"They seemed to have forsaken the world to a greater extent than it behooves them to do. But we do not consider that their prayers, having become more pure by their separation from the world had also become more powerful and more necessary to the world."

The contemplative orders follow in spirit the travels and labors of apostolic men, nourishing and encouraging them with the abundance of their prayers. "I want Trappists in the Vicariate Apostolic," said Msgr. Favier of Peking; "I will not

have them labor in the external ministry, so that they will not be distracted from their life of prayer, penance and their sacred studies, for I know the great assistance a fervent monastery of contemplatives is to our poor Chinese." At a later date he said: "We have at last been able to penetrate into a region hitherto inaccessible, thanks to our dear Trappists."

Consider the mortal life of our Divine Savior. It offers a perfect realization of the Divine Plan. It consisted of thirty years of recollection and solitude, a retreat and penance of forty days, and only after that preparation did He undertake His short evangelical career.

Dom Chautard says: "Here is something more significant, Martha giving Him hospitality in her house was very busy preparing His meal; and her sister, Mary, instead of helping her, remained seated at the feet of Jesus, listening to His exhortations. Martha wished that Jesus should condemn what she called her sister's idleness and bid her help her in her work and thus proclaim the superiority of the active life over the contemplative; but Jesus replied: 'Mary hath chosen the best part.'

(Luke 10.2) and thereby declared the pre-eminence of the interior life over the active."

In the Interior life there is but one thing, union with God; everything else is but incidental. As a certain pious author says of the contemplative orders:

"They have, as it were, their fingers on the keyboard of divine forgiveness and their silent and solitary souls preside over the salvation of souls and the conquests of the Church."

This, then, is a reply to the modernist, the materialist, the would-be reformer, of our day, who so falsely assert that the contemplative orders, the Trappists, and others, are no longer a necessity to the world.

A WING OF THE TRAPPIST ABBEY OF NEW MELLERAY

PART II—A DAY WITH THE TRAPPISTS AT NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

CHAPTER I

TRAPPIST HOSPITALITY

To visit New Melleray Abbey is almost to step back through the centuries to the days when Citeaux was young, hiding unknown in Burgundy forests, through which the world had not yet found its way. The few decades since New Melleray walls were reared already have stained them the tint of ancient stone. A sloping gray and red slate roof blends with the green of venerable trees. Architecture reminiscent of the cloisters of old, glimpses of white-clad, hooded figures pacing slowly to and fro, stillness broken gently by the tolling of the abbey bell, all vivify the impression of reversion to a bygone age.

Neither foreign nor mediaeval is the background, however, for New Melleray Abbey of the Cistercian Order is located in the heart of modern

America. It is in Iowa, just a half hour's drive south-west of the modern city of Dubuque, and of the Mississippi River.

A rustic gate marks the entrance from the highway to the path leading through the park to the lodge. This lodge, a modest frame building, now used for the reception of visitors and for housing the lay workers of the abbey farm, in spite of its slight proportions was at one time the main building of the abbey.

Approaching the lodge, the visitor is greeted by the reverend guest master; the hospitality of the Cistercians has been notable for centuries, a true exemplification of Christian Charity, nor have our modern days cooled its old-time warmth. Therefore, after passing through the locked gate leading from the park to the abbey grounds through which no woman is permitted to go, one is brought directly to the reverend Father Superior. His hearty greetings and cordial extension of Cistercian hospitality, voiced as it is in speech that reveals in this fatherly Trappist priest a son of Ireland, is well designed to set the visitor at ease indeed.

Next the guest is conducted to the Abbey

Church, that he might pay a visit of greeting and respect to the King of Kings; nor does the quiet and simple dignity of His abode fail to impress the guest. One casual visitor at New Melleray Abbey was, in fact, so deeply moved by the experiences of his first few minutes there, that he requested permission to extend a visit originally meant to last but a short time to one of twenty-four hours, in order that he might live for a day the life of a Trappist monk. Needless to say the permission was readily granted, and that his admiration at the Trappist Life was not decreased is witnessed by an account of his experience which he penned shortly after his departure. So well indeed, we believe, does he depict the effect of this life on the layman, that we are reproducing the words of this guest of New Melleray Abbey in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

A VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS

Upon my arrival at the Abbey and after a visit to the Abbey Church, I was moved to ask permission to extend my visit for a full day, in order that I might live the life of a Trappist Monk for that period. The cordial Father Superior made no difficulties and hardly had I voiced the request than my bag was installed in a spacious bed room and I myself was seated before a hearty meal.

My first Trappist repast finished, I was shown through the monastery. Indeed it might well have been lifted bodily from one of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, except for the modern facilities with which it was equipped. Modern lighting and heating methods, a splendid water supply furnished by modern machinery, and other conveniences and necessities of our day enable the monks to live their lives according to an ancint rule under modern conditions of hygiene.

My guide first lead me down a long but rather wide corridor, at one end of which a statue of the

ONE END OF THE NEW MELLERAY CLOISTER

Blessed Virgin, mounted on a platform over a door, indicated to all the veneration in which the Mother of God is held by these Trappists. Ever since the days of the great St. Bernard she has been held in especial reverence by the Cistercian Monks, and every monastery of their order since its foundation has been especially dedicated to her. The little Office of the Blessed Virgin is recited in choir daily. This corridor is called the cloister; here when the weather is inclement, the monks pace to and fro reciting their private prayers. The white clad figures, white walls, and arched white ceiling are marked by no hint of color other than the checkered pattern of the sunlight filtered through stained glass windows.

At the far end of the cloister, we entered a chapel; it was but a tiny room, with two altars, but it boasted of two of the most expressive devotional statues it has been my pleasure to see, one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the other of the Blessed Virgin and to these, Son and Mother, is the chapel dedicated.

The Chapter Room too is a sight seldom seen in our modern times. A long, rather narrow room, it is, the abbot's seat elevated at one end and

benches built along the side walls on which the monks are seated when assembled in chapter. The stations of the cross are suspended around the walls, a crucifix hangs over the wooden canopy that covers the abbot's chair and at the far end a long table and a narrow bench complete the furniture of this simple room. But its simplicity is given dignity and charm by the paneled, wooden walls, the lofty, raftered ceiling, the leaded, stained glass windows, and the beautifully colored stations of the cross brought hither from Europe.

My second visit to the church permitted more leisure to admire modest gothic windows, huge rafters supporting a vaulted roof and a small yet impressive altar of blue and white and gold which harmonized and blended with the remaining simple furniture. This latter consisted of a small organ, the stalls of the choir brothers and near the entrance at the rear a half dozen pews for guests and the lay workers of the abbey farm.

A small statue of the Sorrowful Mother, bearing the body of her dead Son, again brought to mind the veneration held for her by these monks.

From the chapel, my guide lead me to the dormitory, a long and narrow room, with the usual

NEW MELLERAY ABBEY'S CHAPTER ROOM SHOWING ABBOT'S CHAIR IN CENTER

rafftered ceiling and spotless white walls. Lined on either side were the cells of the monks and brothers; each cell appeared to be about six feet square. Half this small space was taken up with the couch; a devotional picture, a holy water font and, surmounting it, a crucifix, completed the furniture of the individual cell. The couch itself, though its springs were boards and its mattress and pillow of canvas covered straw, seemed comfortable enough and promised repose to him who earned it by the labor demanded under St. Benedict's Rule. Nor would winter's coldest nights bring discomfort for sufficient covering is allowed. The open ceiling of the cell and the white curtain at the entrance assured fresh air and coolness in the summer months. The austere simplicity of the dormitory was relieved by no decoration, no ornament of any kind.

Again in the refectory is one carried back in spirit to Citeaux in its mediaeval simplicity. In obedience to the rule, there is at the entrance of this room a small basin in which a tiny fountain of water plays constantly. Here, upon entering each monk and brother must wet his fingers. Though the act now is hardly a necessity, since modern lavatories

replace this utility of St. Benedict's time, still the custom is adhered to; not only by it does the abbey itself adhere to the ancient rule, but the following of this custom is an act of obedience to the individual brother. Even the scoffer would be impressed with the jealous guard against departure from the Rule, which has so long marked the path to glory for the Cistercian Monk.

At the head of the refectory is the table at which are set three places; in the center is the abbot's chair and on either side of this are places for the prior and sub-prior. Ranging lengthways of the room are two longer tables, at which are seated the choir monks and lay brothers. Though the monks and lay brothers each have an individual, backless bench, the abbot, prior and sub-prior are provided with ordinary chairs. This is the sole difference in the refectory existing beween the highest in the abbey and the most humble of the brethren. The food is the same for all, as are the simple table furnishings. Before each place are arranged knife, fork, spoon, plate and cup. A small napkin which is used rather as a table cover, a salt cellar and a pitcher for water suffice for the Cistercian Monk, be he abbot or lay brother.

THE REFECTORY AT NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

Though the variety of the food is limited by the rule of abstinence, there is no lack of it, and a substantial meal of the products of the farm seems to be really enjoyed, probably since labor begets an appetite that requires neither delicacies nor tempting arrangement of viands to satisfy it. Advocates of a vegetarian diet should find many arguments in the health and longevity of the average Cistercian Monk, nor could they disapprove of the light supper of whole wheat bread, honey, butter and tea, with sugar and milk, which was being placed on the table as I was leaving the refectory. The reverend superior told me that the main meal, at noon, consisting as it does of soup, two substantial vegetables, plenty of bread, butter, fruit and a beverage, has met with the approval of prominent dieticians.

Though the Cistercian Rule seemingly gives no thought to recreation, I noticed that a reader's platform, in the center of the room was well supplied with books. Two in particular were worthy of notice because of their antiquity. One was a Bible dated 1688 and though the other showed no date, its antiquity was attested by the character of its paper and binding and the fact that it was

entirely handwritten. Upon inquiry I was told that passages from these various books were read during all meals. Though the books are not what we would call light reading, and possibly by most of us would not be thought of as recreational materials, yet these holy men take their greatest pleasures in hearing of and thinking of their God, so that our standards, whereby reading of this kind would be judged by us, could hardly be applied.

After leaving the refectory, I returned to the church, entering just in time to hearing the monks chanting the Magnificat. As they sang the verse *"Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles,"* it seemed to me as though the words were meant as a prophecy to these Cistercians Monks who so humbly follow the path of the Humble One. After Vespers, the Monks filed silently out of the Church to their supper.

After eating supper, there being still an hour of daylight, I strolled about the abbey grounds and gardens. The paths lead past the old cemetery where all the first monks of the abbey were buried. The graves are marked with a simple iron cross, bearing but the religious name of the de-

A TRAPPIST "GOD'S ACRE"
(Large cross marks grave of late Abbot of New Melleray.)

parted brother and the date of his death. In the new cemetery the grave of the last Abbot of New Melleray who died in 1917 is marked by a beautiful stone cross around which are clustered the simpler crosses of the brethren. Both cemeteries are enclosed with beautiful arbor vitae hedges. No mound marks the individual grave, all being covered with velvety grass which shows the effect of diligent care.

The abbey itself being on a hill, the first monks planted groves of pine trees to serve as shelter from the winds and as a shade in summer. Thus these trees which add so much to the beauty of the grounds have their utility as well. From a distance, so closely are they planted, only glimpses of the abbey can be gotten; they afford an exquisite setting for this abode of the Cistercian on the Iowa hills.

One grove is well worth mentioning, the Pine Walk. It consists of two straight lines of pine trees, over one hundred yards in length, an earthen path running down its center, and a beautiful rural vista at its end. It is nature's reproduction of the cloister walls and on the path, on fine days, the monks may be seen pacing back and forth meditating or engaged in their private devotions.

At a distance are visible the long, ordered rows of the gardens where, so that they might be a burden to no man, the monks cultivate the bulk of their own food. Still farther away may be seen the outlines of the barns and other farm buildings, which now were beginning to grow dim in the twilight. I therefore walked back toward the abbey, on my way passing the numerous bee hives on which I later was to see an elderly monk, too old perhaps for work farther afield, diligently laboring.

As I entered the monastery I noted it was 7:15 P. M., and the Abbey Bell again called the monks to prayer. The chapel was dimly lighted when I reached it, only the flickering red glow of the sanctuary lamp dispelled total darkness. A meditation was read, Compline chanted, and then to terminate their day of prayer, Salve Regina was sung. The beauty of this last can hardly be described; the deep chanting of the voices singing praise to her who is particularly their mother, the solemn chords of the accompanying organ, the darkened church, the dim outlines of the white clad monks, the last words of the Salve Regina, and then a deep, unbroken silence, while the monks devote the last few

THE PINE WALK AT NEW MELLERAY ABBEY

minutes of their day to examination of conscience. I softly rose and left the church, for now began the Great Silence of the night when not even the guest may be allowed to interrupt the meditation of the retiring community.

Though the courteous superior had seemed to think calling me when the monks arose at two o'clock a. m., to be incompatible with hospitality, he yielded to my importunities. So after a few hours sleep, all too few for me, in fact, I again found myself in the abbey church where, before the world awakened these men commenced the Divine Office. As the monks entered the church each one faced the altar and greeted the Blessed Sacrement with a profound bow, this replacing the genuflection almost a universal custom in the Church today. The origin of this custom goes back into the dim recesses of by-gone centuries; the custom itself has followed the unbroken chain of Cistercian life from Citeaux to this New World Abbey, adhered to with the astonishing perseverance of the Cistercian in the traditions and the rules of the order.

The church was but dimly lighted; the monks recited first the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin,

evidently knowing it by heart. Then a half hour's mental prayer. The striking of three o'clock was the signal for lighting the individual reading lamps at each stall and the commencing of Matins and Laudes of the Divine Office. This lasted until nearly four o'clock when each religious, extinguishing his lamp, again prostrated himself to recite the Angelus. At a given signal all filed out to prepare for the private masses. I attended the mass for lay brothers and novices, at which all of these received communion. I then went to the small chapel of the Blessed Virgin to again hear mass so that I might finish my thanksgiving. Leaving the chapel I noticed several lay brothers in the chapter room saying the stations of the cross. The world was just lighting up to a new day and one could not help but thinking of how much these men had worshipped God before the rest of His creatures were stirring.

At five-thirty o'clock the brethren returned to the church for Prime and though they recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin as well as the Divine Office, it lasted but fifteen minutes. They next assembled in Chapter to hear the Martyrology read, a brief explanation of the Rule and to

recite the De Profundis for their departed brethren —the whole as I noticed only lasting about ten minutes. Then they went to their cells to arrange their couches, this taking but little time as the Trappist Monks generally just lie on the cot, sleeping as they do in their habits with only the shoes removed. The breakfast next occupied their attention, consisting of bread in plenty, butter and a choice of beverages; meantime a kindly lay brother lead me to a hearty country breakfast, greatly appreciated after my unusual hours and devotions.

At seven-thirty we were called for "Tierce" and another mass. There is a remarkable similarity between the ceremony of the Trappists and the description of the Last Supper in the revelations of Ann Catherine Emmerich. Here were these monks clad in their white habits, cowled, and with the long, flowing sleeves described by her; they sang the 118th psalm in tierce before mass, as we are told Our Lord and the apostles did, and the mass of course, is the Last Supper reproduced.

CHAPTTER III

THE OLD MONK'S SERMON

After mass I was introduced to a very old monk, one who had, I was told, been in the order many years, having entered after spending some quarter of a century as a parish priest. Father Superior requested Father John to show me about the place, and after again inspecting the bee hives, the gardens and the near-by parts of the farm, we sat on a bench in the park. In the course of our conversation, for the superior had graciously permitted several of the monks and brothers to break the silence and talk to me, I happened to remark that the Trappist had given much to God. My remark, brought forth a sermon from the good father which is well worth repeating, though it is unfortunate that I must depend upon a memory not any too accurate for such repetition.

"My son, surely you don't know what you said when you made that remark, for how could I give anything to God, who owns the whole world and

all that's in it? It's true I gave up some little property and a few personal belongings I was much attached to, but they would have left me at my death and I have now changed them into infinite rewards forever—not to speak of the care and worry I left behind with them. But maybe you mean my poor services, and sacrifices and prayers, when you speak of my giving a great deal to God; let us consider what they really are. Each Mass and Communion is simply a token of love from God and a guarantee to me of so much increased happiness and glory forever, and unlike those of my former life in the world — when, as I remember, I did think I was doing God a favor, as it were—instead of finding it tiresome to pray and it a disagreeable duty to hear mass on Sunday, I now find these things my greatest pleasure, for when fervently done God imparts an unspeakable joy as well as an abudance of grace with them. No, little does the world know of the real life we live as Trappists. The average man would perhaps think he could stand our three or four hours' manual labor, but never be able to rise daily at two o'clock. Now, as a matter of fact, while they rightly think the labor is

not easy, gladly would I do it just for the joy I find in my devotions from two o'clock until daylight. But if it were possible that I give anything to God, who only asks that we let Him give us His precious treasures—and indeed His love for us is so great it makes Him receive our works even as though He needed them—have you ever really considered what he has given and done for me? Do you realize what might well be called the folly of the cross? Let us stop a minute—what do we see:

"The Most Beautiful foully spit upon; the face from which radiate all the joys of heaven covered with a rag; the Most Wise clothed in the garb of a fool; the Emporer of emporers robed in a discarded soldier's purple mantle; the Most Powerful bound; the Most Holy and Chief High Priest annointed with mud and spittle; the King of Glory crowned with thorns; the Lord of hosts has a sceptre of reed; the Most Mild buffeted; the Most Rich impoverished; the Most Bountiful despoiled; the Most Chaste stripped naked; the Most Sacred blasphemed; the Most Learned silenced; the Best blamed; the Most True denied; the Most Lovable hated; the Most Sweet given gall to drink; the Most Blessed cursed; the Most Peaceable molested; the Most Just ac-

cused; the Most Innocent condemned; the Healer wounded;—oh, miracle of love! The Son of God is crucified; the Immortal put to death; the Author of life deprived of it; the Lord and Master is hung on a cross to redeem the servant. Son, would you have that servant reckon up how much he has given such a Master? No, let us give Him what we can, love, gratitude, thanksgiving and praise, and try in our humble way to take up the cross after Him. Let us not think it too much to use a straw pillow when our God had none whereon to lay His head—too much to give up meat and rich food when He counted it little to fast forty days and all His life was abstemious for love of us."

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAPPIST PIONEERS

Father John was probably embarassed at his vehemence, for he discontinued his sermon rather abruptly. To set him at ease, therefore, I asked him to tell me a little of the history of New Melleray Abbey. He agreed readily, and brought me to the library, where I was shown a manuscript, written by an old monk, now many years dead, which covers the first thirty-eight years of the history of New Melleray.

With the customary humility of the Trappist, the brother starts his story with the comment that it is well worthy of "being recorded by a more competent chronicler." Here, in the beginning, he also relates the derivation of the word, "Melleray."

"It is derived thus," he says. "In the year 1145, two monks of Pontrond Monastery in Anjou were sent in search of a fitting place to erect a new monastery; being come to the Village of Moisne in Brittany and being unkindly received there, they

were forced to take shelter in the forest. For their resting place they selected a hollow tree in which wild bees had previously deposited an immense comb of honey, thus providing them with the food that the peasants had denied. From this circumstance, the name of the Abbey is derived—*Mellis alvearium, Mellearium, Melleray.*"

In July of 1848, Dom Bruno Fitzpatrick, the Abbot of Mount Melleray Abbey of Ireland, being moved by that spirit of the order which has always urged the foundation of new abbeys, and Mount Melleray itself having become rather over-crowded, decided to found a new monastery in America. He therefore sent a priest and a lay brother there to seek a proper location. Their mission was hardly a success, for desirable land was hard to find and the two Trappists were becoming rather discouraged when they were in receipt of a letter from their Abbot stating he was about to join them.

Since the two monks had been sent to America, Msgr. Loras, Bishop of Dubuque, Iowa, had visited Ireland and called upon Dom Bruno at Mt.Melleray. He was greatly impressed with the life of the monks and expressed a strong desire to have a monastery of Trappists in his diocese. He there-

fore offered them a tract of prairie land lying about twelve miles from the city of Dubuque in a southwesterly direction. Dom Bruno accepted the offer and at once set sail for America.

Dom Bruno, upon arriving in this country hastened to Dubuque across a country unsupplied with good means of communication. The trip across the continent was a hardship such as we know little of today. However he found the site given by Bishop Loras satisfactory and at once sent to Ireland for sixteen monks to come to New Melleray to aid in starting the foundations. Dom Bruno himself laid the foundation of New Melleray Abbey on July 16, 1849.

Father James O'Gorman was named the first superior and Dom Bruno returned to Ireland.

The sixteen Irish Cistercians embarked from Liverpool on a sailing vessel, "The Carnatic of Boston" which made the trip to New Orleans in exactly seven weeks. The brethren then embarked on a boat sailing up the Mississippi River to St. Louis; the chronicler expressed much wonder at the sights they saw, especially "the poor black slaves working on the plantations that lined the banks."

The sorrow and hardship that always seemed to mark the foundation of a new house in the order did not pass them by. On the way up the river, cholera, then raging, attacked the little band and the bodies of six of its members are buried in various places along the river bank. It was a sorrowful little community that finally gathered at New Melleray.

Winter was then at hand. There were no completed buildings on the land. It was too cold to burrow in the ground to make "dug-outs," as their nearby pioneering neighbors had done. So the brethren had to sleep in piles of hay for the greater part of the winter.

The generosity of the good Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St. Joseph's Convent, which was in the vicinity, was one of the few bright spots in the lives of these pioneering Trappists. For nearly three years the sisters baked bread for the brothers and monks, mended their clothing and were in many other ways charitable, helpful and truly Christian in their neighborliness. Nor did the assistance received stop here, for when the Fathers sole team of horses was struck and killed by lightning, the founder

and chaplain of the good sister's convent sent over the price of a replacement of this team immediately, thus greatly relieving the distress caused by this misfortune, to New Melleray. All that the good sisters and their pastor required in return was the prayers of the fathers—nor have they been forgotten for the Cistercian remembers forever in his prayers the benefactor of his order.

By dint of arduous labor and almost superhuman exertions was the new foundation made to prosper. More comfortable buildings were erected, the farms were gotten under cultivation and slowly but surely the few simple wants of the brethren were wrung from the land.

In 1854, at an election in the Chapter Room, Father Clement Smyth was elected superior of the monastery. He ruled the community wisely and well, and it prospered under his direction. But Providence had designated him for a wider field of activity. In May of 1857, Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis, consecrated Father Clement coadjutor Bishop of Dubuque. Iowa's gain was at the expense of New Melleray which thus gave one of its most brilliant sons to the diocese.

The new superior of New Melleray, till May,

ANOTHER VIEW OF NEW MELLERAY ABBEY
(The broken walls at ends show incomplete state of building.)

1859, was Father James O'Gorman. Again New Melleray suffered a loss that others might gain for Father James O'Gorman was consecrated Bishop of Nebraska, at that time a territory of many times the size of Ireland. It since has been divided into several states. Thus, in giving up its members to high office in our Church, the Cistercian Monastery of New Melleray sacrificed its own welfare to that of the majority.

At the General Chapter of 1862 New Melleray was raised to the dignity of an Abbey. The Right Reverend Ephrem McDonnell was its first Abbot. Progress during the next few years was hindered by the Civil War and the hard times that followed in its wake.

Though New Melleray flourished for a few years, the latter part of the century and the years to the present have not carried out the promises of rapid success indicatd in the first two or three decades of its existence.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century vocations showed a decided decrease. At present, however, the community shows signs of new life with four professed young brothers, three choir

and five lay novices and a total of over thirty members.

This very persistence of the small community to maintain its existence, makes one feel that the Divine Heart will not let so great a blessing be taken even from an unappreciative people. May we not hope that our country, which is now making so great an effort to honor His mother in her Immaculate Conception, may through her merit this blessing? Even from a temporal point of view one might look for this, too for on visiting New Melleray Abbey with its extensive and beautiful farm lands and seeing the many vacant cells in the huge dormitory and the empty stalls in choir, it makes one feel sure God did not raise so fine a monastery and so bless it temporally without some end in view. In many rspects their situation at this abbey is analogous to that of St. Stephen and his companions. May it not be that history repeating itself, an American St. Bernard and some generous Americans will bring, by God's grace, this now languishing community to a flourishing condition?

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

But, I was abruptly brought back to the realization that time was flying by the bell that called Father John to sext, at 11:15 o'clock A. M., I followed him to the church and there took my farewell of the Divine Master of New Melleray Abbey Who is bodily present there as surely as He exists in the most flourishing Abbey of the Cistercian Order.

Immediately after the fifteen minutes devoted to "Sext," I gratefully ate the hearty dinner prepared for me and then took my leave of New Melleray and its hospitality which had furnished me, with an experience so unique yet withal so pleasant that I am certain my mind will ever retain the thought of the abbey bell softly calling the good Cistercian Monks to prayer.

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